



in focus

ENGAGING YOUTH FOR POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONS

FOSTERING NEPALI YOUTH AS CHAMPIONS OF REFORM

Designing a Better Future for the Country

On August 1, USAID/Nepal launched an online essay contest to commemorate International Youth Day. Targeting Nepali youth aged 18 to 30, the contest advanced our objective of encouraging and expanding civic and political engagement of local youth. Participants were encouraged to reflect upon, discuss, and create ideas about youth's role in the larger socio-political context of Nepal. In partnership with the Youth Initiative, a local youth-led NGO, the contest was designed to mine and publicize youth-generated responses to the all-important questions: In what way, how, and when will the young Nepali generation play a more decisive, active role in the country's future? Nearly 100 youth from all corners of Nepal participated in the contest. The essays were reviewed for the ideas presented as much as the contestants' creative writing skills by a judging panel that included the celebrated author of *Forget Kathmandu* and *Tutor of History*, Manjushree Thapa, and Rabintra Mishra, the widely respected Head of BBC Nepali World Services. Here's a glimpse of the top two winning essays:

THE WINNER!

Responsible Youth : Prosperous Nepal

On a learning mission about how the pond irrigation scheme helped farmers, I knew Ganesh Thapa Magar, a 21 year old father who grows vegetables for livelihood in rural Dailekh. Laxman, a good volley ball player from the same village, is a 17 year old boy who will soon leave his 15 year old wife to go to India to make ends meet. Ramesh, a 27 year old graduate has been looking for a job in Kathmandu for the last two years. There is Ashim, around 21 year old tech entrepreneur, who is also involved in facebook movement "Common Youth Stand Up" to pressure the government for timely constitution. There are youths in organizations such as Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), who have done an incredible job of helping the government collect the new upcoming census. There are youth from political wings of CPN (UML) who are holding bandas (shut down of cities) these days, and there are youth such as the 16 year old Kushal KC from Baglung who just made a Solar Car.

The list of youth engaged in good, evil or beyond is much longer in the context of Nepal. How to promote good and how to eliminate evil within youth who have lost track are important questions in a country where about 38 percent of the youth are currently unemployed and each year 400,000 young people enter labor market (Youth Survey of Nepal 2011). How should Nepal engage labor force where 46 percent of young people aged between 20-24 years are highly underutilized and remain outside the formal economy? (Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008) We all know, this year 47.16 percent of the 419,049 of students who appeared in this year's SLC examination passed. Last year the percentage of students who passed the examination was 55.5 percent. What happens to youths who do not pass the exam? Furthermore, same issue arises on students who are

1st Runner Up

The Role of the Nepali Youth for a Better Future

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." – Alan Kay

Human thought and action shape the arc of both individual and social prosperity. This understanding could not be farther from the truth given the present precarious situation in Nepal, both as a state and, most importantly, as a society. In this essay, I argue that the youth of Nepal are our best hope for creating a favorable environment for socio-economic reform in the country. Specifically, I emphasize that the need for a solution demands the acceptance of the "reality of now" and warrants an activist approach among the youth to facilitate a critical inquiry of our value systems, a culture of entrepreneurship, and an openness to the changing paradigms of regional and international affairs.

Critical Inquiry as an Ethic

The Nepali youth constitutes a dominant share of the national demography, and thus the best hope for a better future for the country. The youth, aged 16-40, comprises two-fifths of the national population and more than three-quarters of the independent workforce. Unfortunately, socio-economic state institutions and cultural realities inhibit meaningful and substantial youth participation in most of the important national conversations, such as post-conflict reconstruction and economic reform. In addition, the popular opinion of youth involvement is misrepresented by the militant youth organizations that serve narrow political interests; hence, the most definitive challenge of the Nepali youth is to redefine its contribution to the country and to alter the perception of its misrepresented identity. Additionally, conventional wisdom has it that youth lack wisdom; even if this popular adage is conceded for the sake of



Photo: Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON)

Responsible Youth : Prosperous Nepal

involved with undergraduate and graduate studies. There are youth who cannot complete education or the ones that spend a year or two looking for jobs after university have to be engaged. Is the rote learning culture instigated in these youth enough to make them adequately prepared for the job market? Furthermore, the society, including the parent who sees their kids as chickens that had better lay golden eggs rather than individuals who can think for themselves is not helping the youth from designing a sustainable future for themselves and the country. Amongst the youth as well, the blind imitation of the west and their values, without a proper self-inspection on its implications for our own cultures is confusing them.

If we are to promote youth to be champions of reform, then these youth along with other fortunate youth should be empowered. For that we need to provide them with practical opportunities that have remained beyond the interests of academic institutions, many of which seem more of a business than temples of learning.

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Saroj Dhakal, 28, is the Chief Operating Officer of Wind Power Nepal Pvt. Ltd, with a keen interest in farms - from poultry, coffee to wind.

The Role of the Nepali Youth for a Better Future

argument, the youth possess ingenuity, knowledge, and ability to drive national development. This redefinition of youth identity can pave a path toward mutual respect and cooperation between youth and other national demographic groups as well as the international community.

Nepali youth needs to redefine itself by assuming a position at the forefront of critical inquiry into dogmatic social, economic, and political values. For example, Nepali society has a strong commitment to cultural traditions and stagnant social hierarchies. One aspect of this commitment is manifested in an unquestioned respect for authority that unfortunately makes it palatable for many Nepali to glorify unjustified state interventions and indulge factional disputes among political elites. Hence, I call upon the youth to create a culture of individualism and activism that will confront all infractions against the rule of law and economic freedom.

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Jason Shah, 22, is a recent college graduate in Diplomacy and International Organizations.

Read the complete version of both essays in our official facebook page (notes): <http://facebook.com/usaidnepal>



We were very pleased at the response we received for the essay contest to commemorate International Youth Day. Saroj Dhakal and Jason Shah came to USAID for their recognition awards and spent time expanding on the innovative ideas they presented in their essays. We also welcomed another group of youth from traditionally excluded groups into our Internship program. We are as excited as they are to have them work with our USAID teams and gain skills that will build their capacities as they move forward in their careers. Out of the 'Youth' category, we also said goodbye to a very special long-term employee, Tri Ratna Tuladhar. We will miss him but appreciate the experience he has passed down to other colleagues. So...we highlight young and older in this edition, which we hope you all enjoy.

Sheila Lutjens, Deputy Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

SNAPSHOT: USAID'S YOUTH - FOCUSED PROGRAMS

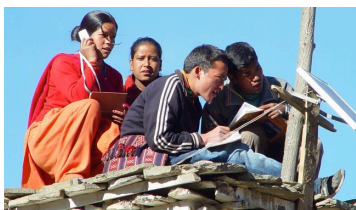
Education for Income Generation (EIG) Program

Started in 2008, the multifaceted EIG program continues to increase access to productive job opportunities and improve incomes for the poor and disadvantaged while also creating a workforce that is crucial for the country's economic growth. It offers a package of literacy, technical and vocational training, agricultural productivity and enterprise training, and scholarships for disadvantaged youth between the ages of 16 and 30. As of June 2012, 74,464 youth have been trained.

Over 30,000 disadvantaged youth have graduated from the literacy program. 82 percent of the 11,546 vocational training graduates have jobs or are self-employed with monthly incomes of 2,400 rupees or above.

Over 54,000 marginalized youth have been trained in high-value agricultural production and are linked to private sector agricultural input and output markets. They have, on average, doubled their income and increased their access to nutritious foods.

Over 400 dalit youth have received scholarships to pursue intermediate level education, mostly in teaching, some in technical fields such as junior technical assistants (agriculture), community medical assistants, and assistant midwife nurses.



The Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes (SPPELP) Program

The SPPELP program, implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), partnered with young and freshmen parliamentarians to create the Next Generation of Parliamentarians Group (NGPG) on August 26, 2011. NGPG seeks to generate interest among the next generation of Members of Parliament to formulate effective parliamentary leadership and create a thriving, interactive, multi-partisan space for all legislators to participate equally and respectfully in policy deliberation. It provides a platform for dedicated young Nepali leaders to come together, learn, network, and build the partnerships necessary to take on the development challenges of the country and help advance the political careers of the young parliamentarians. Additionally, the SPPELP program also launched the Future Leadership Academy (FLA) in April 2012 for talented political party members aged 18 to 39 from both the district and national level. FLA offer participants training in democratic principles and transparent party mechanisms in order for them to articulate and pass these values to other party members and shape party decision-making. The program offers a multi-party environment for youth party members, Nepal's future leaders, to hold open dialogues and establish bonds across party lines.



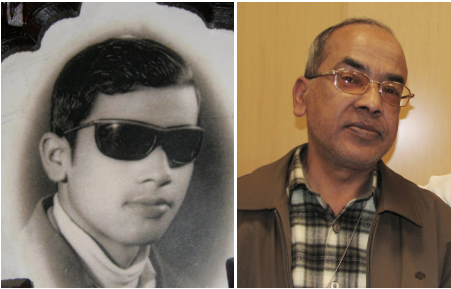
Special Youth Outreach Campaign

USAID also has a number of special youth outreach projects managed by USAID's Program Office and designed with the understanding that Nepali youth are increasingly speaking up to demand a more inclusive, responsible and sustainable Nepali state with room for the growth of more accountable leaders from their own ranks. While large numbers of young people are still leaving the country, educated Nepalis are returning from abroad in increasingly greater numbers, and this group is committed to building their lives in the country. At present, their desire for positive change within the society is not anchored to a coherent agenda or strategy. However, they could prove a dynamic force going forward if they can build relationships across the country and find a collective direction.



A JOURNEY OF FOUR DECADES WITH USAID : TRI RATNA TULADHAR

Tri Ratna Tuladhar joined USAID at the age of 17 as a Junior Clerk on January 26, 1970. He continued to serve for 42 years and retired as the Senior-most Budget Program Specialist last month in 2012. Here are a few extracts from his personal memoir:



“I was already working here for more than four years when Administrator Rajiv Shah was born. During my past four decades, I have seen many political and administrative changes in Nepal and the U.S - Eight Presidents in the United States; Four Kings and one President in Nepal; 13 Administrators at USAID; 13 Mission Directors in Nepal; 15 U.S. Ambassadors to Nepal; Nepal's transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy and to federal democratic republic! As I recall, the name of the agency was changed only once, from United States Operations Mission (USOM) to the current United States Agency for International Development (USAID), but USAID's logo has changed many times. When I joined, there were very few women staff members. But we now have more inclusive, gender-balanced staff personnel. Many have come and gone. Some fell in love and got married and some, unfortunately, died while in service.”



“During the past 60 years, USAID has funded hundreds of projects and/or programs in almost every field. While I consider each project or program to be of equal importance, I believe the following three projects or programs have immensely contributed for the development of the country:

Nepali Malaria Control Project: Malaria was Nepal's most serious health problem in the 1950s afflicting nearly 25 percent of the population. In collaboration with World Health Organization and the Government of Nepal, USAID helped set up the Nepal Malaria Eradication Organization and as a result, hundreds of thousands of acres of the productive agricultural land in the Terai was freed from this deadly disease and made available for agriculture and settlement. USAID assistance helped Nepal control malaria by bringing malaria cases to a bare minimum.

Training Program: USAID's extensive in-service and participant training programs helped develop institutional and human resource capacity in Nepal. USAID designed and implemented the Manpower Development Project (1973-1980), the Radio Education Teacher Training Project, and the Development Training Project (1985-2000), etc. through which tens of thousands of public and private sector individuals received all kinds of training in the U.S., third world countries, and in-country; and their expertise have contributed significantly towards Nepal's development.

Infrastructure Development: In the early years of its support to the Government of Nepal, USAID had projects in building infrastructure, both physical and institutional. USAID has made remarkable contributions in the infrastructure development of Nepal such as developing Nepal's first modern telephone exchange, construction and renovation of hundreds of health units; expanded Bir Hospital to include a surgical wing; development of aviation capacity and airports; helped open the country's first and largest industrial district, Balaju, and many more.”



“42 years is a long time to serve in a single organization. Unless and until someone breaks this record, I am sure I will always be remembered as the longest-serving employee of the Mission. The only thing that makes me sad is that I am retiring at an early age of 60. However, I console myself with the feeling that I have worked my life to the fullest. After four decades of continued service, I think I deserve some rest.”



I am HAPPY because I have MEMORIES with me
that I'll cherish FOREVER.

FROM THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S DESK

David C. Atteberry, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

Government to take ownership of the Country's Development Process? Let's Work towards it!

Last week's Himalayan Times article "Chief Secy against free rein to donor agencies" caught my attention for several reasons. The author mentioned that officials at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) had been cautioned against accepting all donor-conceived programs in the name of development. But it was Chief Secretary Lila Mani Paudel's quote, "our programs are better than theirs" that struck me most. For us – USAID – it is not a matter of "our" programs vs. the "Government of Nepal's" programs – in fact it is our policy that all our investments have one objective – to further and advance

the Government of Nepal's strategies, plans and programs. This being said I applaud the Chief Secretary's message that the Government of Nepal (GON) is ready and wanting to lead, manage, and most importantly, take ownership of the country's development process.

I fully welcome the Chief Secretary's thoughts about getting Nepal back in the driver's seat of taking responsibility for its development efforts and demonstrating accountability to its people. At the same time, while country ownership is the ideal for international development aid, fostering country ownership is still a work-in-progress, not just in Nepal but across the world.

To date, USAID has been a collaborative donor, consistently working with the GON and the people of Nepal for over the past sixty years. Every year we sign an annual Assistance Agreement wherein every program and every penny allocated in our development assistance is described and agreed upon with the Ministry of Finance, our key counterpart, as the Nepal Government entity responsible for all international Foreign AID Coordination.

Read the [complete blog](#).



NEWS IN BRIEF - AUGUST 2012

USAID Assumes Role of Donor's Representative to the National Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD)

Cell: Recognizing USAID's significant support to Nepal's REDD+ readiness process through the Hariyo Ban [Green Forests] program, the Government of Nepal and other donors nominated USAID as the Donor's Representative to the National REDD Cell. The REDD Cell is a working group established under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation to prepare Nepal to participate in carbon markets by defining the national architecture, supportive policies, and a REDD+ Strategy. Other donors supporting the REDD+ readiness in Nepal include World Bank, UNDP, and DFID.

USAID Conducts First River Basin Scale Study of Critical Biodiversity Area:

The USAID funded Hariyo Ban program, implemented by WWF, commissioned a series of landmark studies on biodiversity, forestry, and the drivers of loss and degradation. These studies look - for the first time- beyond district and political boundaries to the Kali Gandaki River Basin as a whole. This ecological landscape connects the High Himalaya to the Terai and links two well-known and critical

conservation areas: Annapurna Conservation Area and Chitwan National Park in Nepal.

The studies in the Chitwan-Annapurna Landscape (CHAL) as the River Basin landscape is also called, fill a gap in the knowledge of an area of the Government's recognized Sacred Himalayan Landscape, which has been recently extended to the natural divide between the Eastern and Western Himalayan ecosystems i.e., the Kali Gandaki River.

Over one hundred representatives from local conservation and forestry user groups attended a stakeholder workshop to comment and show their support of the studies. This gave legitimacy to the landscape in the eyes of the Government and partners alike. Furthermore, these studies will be the basis for all future planning and programming within Hariyo Ban in this landscape, and feed into the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification System (MRV) required under the National REDD+ framework as baseline information. Finally, the studies will help the Government guide future efforts in this region, and supports a new government decision to switch their focus from political boundaries to watersheds across Nepal.

An Update on the GIS Integration Project for

Nepal Disaster Preparedness: In partnership with the Government's National Planning Commission (NPC) and USAID, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Pacific Disaster Center (PDC) commenced the first phase of the Nepal Geographic Information System (GIS) Integration Project from July 1 to 6, 2012. The project, which is expected to complete in September 2013, will help identify and integrate GIS capabilities and resources for the Government of Nepal, specifically the NPC, to improve disaster management, development and planning. The ability of the Government of Nepal to maximize the use of geospatial technologies and resources is currently limited by a broad range of issues. For instance, there are very few data sharing agreements between ministries, which means money and resources are being spent on duplicative efforts, ministries are limited to using only the data that they have gathered themselves, and some ministries require payment to share data with others. Synchronizing GIS capabilities will help the Government of Nepal, as well as the international community, make informed decisions on prioritization and allocation of resources for disaster risk reduction projects, development and land-use planning.



INSIDE USAID/NEPAL

Welcoming the Fifth Batch of Interns

Our latest cohort of interns officially started their nine-month internship from August 27. USAID/Nepal's Internship program is an intensely competitive program initiated in 2007 to which more than thousands of candidates apply every year. The objective is to provide professional experience to individuals from traditionally excluded groups (Dalit and Disadvantaged groups) in order to prepare them to assume greater decision making roles in their communities. Through the nine-month period, the interns are placed in various technical and support offices within USAID and assigned mentors who will provide them with professional experience and exposure, preparing them for the job market.